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## Connecting Non Full-time Faculty to Institutional Mission: A Guidebook for College/University Administrators & Faculty Developers (review)

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## **Abstract**

The employment of non full-time faculty is a major issue in higher education and much has been written on its virtues and perils, especially in the past decade. In *Connecting Non Full-time Faculty to Institutional Mission*, Lenora BaronNixon adds much needed breadth to the discussion by exploring the challenges these faculty members face and outlining the actions needed for their successful integration into the mission and culture of the institution

## **Disciplines**

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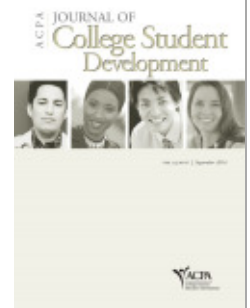
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## **Connecting Non Full-time Faculty to Institutional Mission: A Guidebook for College / University Administrators & Faculty Developers (review)**

Kevin Kane

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*Connecting Non Full-time Faculty to Institutional Mission: A Guidebook for College / University Administrators & Faculty Developers*

Leora Baron-Nixon

Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2007, 224 pages,  
\$24.95 (softcover).

*Reviewed by* Kevin Kane, Iowa State University

The employment of non full-time faculty is a major issue in higher education and much has been written on its virtues and perils, especially in the past decade. In *Connecting Non Full-time Faculty to Institutional Mission*, Lenora Baron-Nixon adds much needed breadth to the discussion by exploring the challenges these faculty members face and outlining the actions needed for their successful integration into the mission and culture of the institution.

*Connecting Non Full-time Faculty to Institutional Mission* is timely in the contingent faculty debate. Working under various classifications and titles (non tenure-track faculty, contingent faculty, lecturers, clinicians, adjuncts, etc.) these faculty members serve important functions for institutions and their missions and, as such, most higher education institutions seemingly embrace these non full-time faculty members. However, in many cases there is little institutional commitment to these staff members beyond the short-term contracts under which they traditionally work. Additionally, the increasing use of contingent faculty has created a shift in the workforce causing a tension between administrators trying to keep budgets in line and full-time faculty trying to keep the tenure system alive and well (Lyons, 2004).

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP), seems to be split on the issue. Alternatively, AAUP supports contingent

faculty by acknowledging how important it is to improve aspects of their employment including compensation and professional support (AAUP, 2007) yet wants to limit the number of contingent faculty by recommending that no more than 15% of an institution's instruction be delivered by contingent faculty and no more than 25% in any department (AAUP, 2001).

In an institutional environment where the issue of contingent faculty generates such passion, *Connecting Non Full-time Faculty to Institutional Mission* addresses the sometimes contentious and always sensitive subject with a positive, transforming outlook. Assuming that the need for non full-time faculty members will not subside, Baron-Nixon rises above the political and cultural fray to deliver a common sense guide on how academic administrators can successfully integrate these important faculty members into the institution for the common good of all its stakeholders.

Understanding that the primary function of the non full-time faculty member is teaching, Baron-Nixon addresses issues concerning the ideal environment for learning. Many of these issues relate to the faculty in general and have been addressed in other books and articles on the subject. However, in this book the author outlines specific suggestions for non full-time faculty, focusing on the importance of connections to the institution, the department, teaching, students, and scholarship for success to be realized. Each chapter in the *Connecting Non Full-time Faculty to Institutional Mission* relating to these specific connections contains two sections: major challenges to the connections and action plans to create the desired connections. This new, integrative perspective on non full-time

faculty makes the analysis especially engaging.

Baron-Nixon begins with an overview of the non full-time faculty member and the particular challenges of such a position within a tradition-rich environment such as higher education. The insights on this cultural setting and the challenges for these faculty are where *Connecting Non Full-time Faculty to Institutional Mission* stands apart from other writings on the subject. The author takes the time to set up the environmental situations in which these faculty members are asked to produce and shows how many of their roles and expectations are sub optimized against one another.

The book provides an example of this tension that underscores the very reason these faculty are available only part-time. Their ties to real world work experiences have potential to add excellent experiential learning outcomes to the curriculum. However, the lack of their time available to the institution, or that the institution is willing to provide to them, hinders the teacher/student relationships that are so important to learning. Baron-Nixon suggests that from the student's point of view there should be no differentiation whether the faculty member delivering the material is full- or part-time, tenured, tenure-track, or non tenure-eligible. It is in the institution's best interest, and indeed inherent to its mission, that this instruction be as seamless as possible.

Baron-Nixon covers many other examples of the challenges facing non full-time faculty including differing schedules, lack of time with administration and other faculty, lack of mentoring relationships, lack of input to the curriculum, and lack of professional development opportunities. Additionally, Baron-Nixon weaves these challenges into action plans for the success of these faculty members, an area where much of the strength of the book lies.

With these action-oriented solutions, including integration of the faculty member

into the culture of a department and the institution (i.e., governance issues, adding a non full-time faculty affairs coordinator at the institutional level, providing professional development support, and compensation for availability to students outside of class), Baron-Nixon provides all the materials needed for academic administrators to develop a strategic plan for the support of non full-time faculty. Results of these interventions could include a sense of belonging, increased loyalty to the institution, an institutional vision for non full-time faculty, and an enhancement of the overall quality of teaching at the institution.

Baron-Nixon has created a concise guide by combining the exploration of current issues involving contingent faculty, the particular challenges that confront the non full-time faculty workforce, and the actions that need to be carried out to establish connections to the institution. The careful consideration of these perspectives make *Connecting Non Full-time Faculty to Institutional Mission* an important addition to any higher education collection. The excellent bibliography, with its extensive list of unpublished doctoral dissertations, is also very helpful for those wishing to further explore the topic. This book, in combination with wise leadership, could have a profound affect in more tightly integrating non-full time faculty into institutional culture with a resulting rise in institutional excellence.

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